

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 13011 201603Z

41

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

INRE-00 USIE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OPR-02 A-01 SY-05 OC-05

CCO-00 SCCT-01 SCA-01 SCS-03 ACDA-05 /096 W

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O 201458Z OCT 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6714

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY ATHENS PRIORITY

USINT BAGHDAD UNN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CDT SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 13011 201603Z

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: TENSIONS UP; MORALE DOWN

REF: BEIRUT 12955 (18 OCT 75 1140Z)

1. SUMMARY: ROOF ONCE AGAIN COLLAPSED NIGHT OCT 19-20
ON SHELL-SHOCKED BEIRUTIS WHO HAD JUST BEGUN TO HOPE SUNDAY
THAT RELATIVE CALM ESTABLISHED OVER PRECEDING DAYS WOULD
HOLD. IN WAKE OF SUBSTANTIAL ARMED CLASHES BEGINNING SUN-
DAY EVENING AND CONTINUING THROUGH EARLY MONDAY MORNING,
RADIO LEBANON IS CAUTIONING RESIDENTS (WHO NEED LITTLE
URGING) TO ESCHEW STREETS OF CAPITAL AND TRAFFIC IS SLIGHT.
COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY, INCLUDING HAMRA AREA, IS AGAIN AT
STANDSTILL, ALTHOUGH EXCHANGES OF FIRE AS OF 1500 HOURS LOCAL
SPORADIC AND CONFINED PRIMARILY TO ASHRAFIYEH AND SURROUND-
ING AREAS. BARRICADES ARE REPORTED IN AMANY AREAS. AM-
CITS SAFE BUT SHAKEN. END SUMMARY.

2. LAST NIGHT'S FIGHTING WAS SPARKED BY CLASH BETWEEN RAS
AN NABEH (NORTH OF HIPPODROME AND EAST OF BESHARA AL
KHOURY STREET) AND PHALANGE-HELD ASHRAFIYEH QUARTER. AC-
CORDING TO SOME ACCOUNTS, RESIDENTS OF RAS AN NABEH (PRE-
DOMINANTLY SUNNI MOSLEM) WERE INCENSED AT THE DISCOVERY
AT APPROX 1600 HOURS LOCAL OCT 19 OF BODY OF RESIDENT (SHIITE
MOSLEM WITH BROTHER IN SYRIAN-SPONSORED SA'IQA IN SOME
VERSIONS) KIDNAPPED SEVERAL DAYS EARLIER. IT NOT CLEAR,
HOWEVER, THAT OUTBURST WAS SPONTANEOUS AND TRIGGERED
PRIMARILY BY RECOVERY OF NEIGHBORHOOD VICTIM'S BODY. WE
HAVE RECEIVED ONE SECOND-HAND REPORT THAT LEBANESE
COMMUNIST PARTY ELEMENTS IN RAS AN NABEH (CPL HEAD-
QUARTERS IS ON LOWER END OF AL HOUT STREET) WERE PREPAR-
ING FOR EVENING'S BATTLE AS EARLY AS SUNDAY MORNING. WHILE
THIS REPORT IS NOT RPT NOT CORROBORATED AT THIS TIME BY OTHER
SOURCES, IT IS TRUE THAT RAS AN NABEH HAD REMAINED ONE OF
THE MORE TROUBLED LOCALITIES IN CITY AND THAT FIVE CHRISTIANS
WERE KIDNAPPED FROM CITY BUS IN THAT VICINITY AT ABOUT 1500
HOURS LOCAL, OCT 19. FURTHERMORE, TWO INDEPENDENT AND
USUALLY RELIABLE SOURCES REPORT THAT ARMED "NON PALESTINIANS"
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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 13011 201603Z

FRAM RAS AN NABEH BEGAN INFILTRATING THE OUTSKIRTS OF
ASHRAFIYEH FROM ABOUT 1700 HOURS LOCAL. THERE SEEKS LITTLE
DOUBT, WHATEVER THE WHO-STRUCK-JOHN OF THE MATTER,
THAT RAS AN NABEH WAS THE LOCALE OF THE FIRST CLASHES.

3. SKIRMISHES APPARENTLY ESCALATED TO MORTAR AND ROCKET EX-
CHANGES BY ABOUT 2300 HOURS LOCAL OCT 19 AND INTENSIFIED OVER
NEXT TWO HOURS UNTIL ENTIRE LINE RUNNING ROUGHLY ALONG BESHARA

AL KHOURY STREET ERUPTED. DURING EARLY MORNING HOURS, CLASHES AND SHELLING MOVED INTO KANTARI QUARTER JUST ABOVE HOLIDAY INN (ST. CHARLES CENTER OFFICE BUILDING IMMEDIATELY ADJACENT TO HOLIDAY INN TOOK RPG ROUND AT DAWN). ALTHOUGH LEVEL OF CLASHES TAPERED OFF CONSIDERABLY BY 0800 HOURS LOCAL OCT 20, EFFECT OF OVERNIGHT ROW WAS SUFFICIENT TO MAKE MOST RESIDENTS, LEBANESE AND FOREIGN ALIKE, TURN TURTLE.

4. ELSEWHERE IN COUNTRY, TRIPOLI IS REPORTED QUIET AND ZAHLE TENSE BUT QUIET. KASLIK YACHT CLUB NEAR JOUNEH WAS TARGET OF DELAYED-ACTION ROCKET ATTACK NIGHT OCT 19. OF FOUR ROCKETS SIGHTED ON CLUB FROM HILLS ABOVE, THREE EXPLODED CAUSING SOME MATERIAL DAMAGE. WE SUSPECT THIS ATTACK IS CONNECTED WITH ACCUSATIONS OF JUMBLATT AND LEFT THAT CHRISTIANS ARE LANDING ARMS ON THIS PART OF COASTLINE BY NIGHT.

5. ON POLITICAL FRONT, PRESS STATES THREE SIGNIFICANT MEETINGS HAVE BEEN SCHEDULED. FIRST, SET FOR MORNING OCT 20 AT BKERKE, IS MARONITE CONCLAVE WHICH WAS TO BRING GEMAYEL AND RAYMOD EDDE TOGETHER IN EFFORT TO RECONCILE THEIR DISCORDANT VIEWS. SECOND, SCHEDULED FOR AFTERNOON OCT 20, WAS FURTHER SESSION OF POLITICAL SUBCOMMITTEE OF "DIALOGUE COMMITTEE" WHICH WAS POSTPONED UNTIL OCT 22 BECAUSE PARTICIPANTS UNABLE REACH MEETING SITE. THIRD IS REGULAR SESSION OF PARLIAMENT WHICH IS SLATED TO CONVENE OCT 21. FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS WILL BE ELECTION OF SPEAKER (KAMAL AS ASAD IS TIPPED TO BE RE-ELECTED WITHOUT OPPOSITION), BUT WE UNDERSTAND JUMBLATT AND HIS SUPPORTERS IN PARLIAMENT WILL BOYCOTT PROCEEDINGS.

6. COMMENT: SO FAR AS EMBASSY IS AWARE, ALL AMCITS REMAIN SAFE. EFFECTS OF LAST NIGHT'S CLASHES ON NERVES OF
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PAGE 04 BEIRUT 13011 201603Z

BATTLE-TESTED AMERICAN COMMUNITY, BOTH OFFICIAL AND NON-OFFICIAL, WAS, HOWEVER, DISPROPORTIONATE TO THE SCALE OF FIGHTING. ALTHOUGH PROBABLY NO MORE SEVERE THAN OTHER AREMD CONFRONTATIONS IN BEIRUT SUBURBS DURING THIS AND PREVIOUS ROUND, AUTOMATIC WEAPONS FIRE AND SHELLING (INCLUDING 120 MM MORTARS) WAS SOMEWHAT CLOSER TO AND INFINITELY MORE AUDIBLE IN RAS BEIRUT THAN FOREGOING CLASHES. PRUDENT DECISION NOT RPT NOT TO OPEN AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL OCT 20 (FIRST DAY MISSED SINCE OPENING) ALSO HAS DEPRESSING EFFECT ON COMMUNITY MORALE. ALTHOUGH CALLS FROM AMCITS TO EMBASSY UP SUBSTANTIALLY TODAY, WE SEE NO EVIDENCE AT THIS TIME OF PANIC OR STAMPEDE TO LEAVE COUNTRY. MOST AMCITS APPEAR TO BE WAITING TO SEE WHAT DARKNESS WILL BRING.
GODLEY

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